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US Marines Headed to South Afghanistan to Slow Taliban Gains

By Jason Ditz
April 18, 2017



With the US seeking to slow the mounting losses by the Afghan military in the southern Helmand Province, the Pentagon has announced a deployment of roughly 300 US Marines to the province, with the fighters expected to arrive by the end of the month.

The deployment marks the largest single deployment of US Marines in occupied Afghanistan since 2014, which reflects the Afghan military's growing woes in combat. These troops will join smaller numbers the US had already deployed into the area, who were nominally "advisers."

And while officially, the new Marines are also "advise-and-assist" troops that are being sent in a non-combat role, Col. Matthew Reid confirmed that the Marines are always deployed "with a combat mindset." Given how poorly the Afghan military has done on its own, it wouldn't be surprising to find the Marines in combat situations.

Large numbers of US and British soldiers were deployed in Helmand earlier in the war, but officials had withdrawn them largely in the transition away from direct combat missions. Since then, Helmand has been among the major targets of the Taliban, and they've captured large portions of the province.